

Original "Stuttgart Special" Lives On In Arkansas

By Lorn Manthey, Contributing Editor

In the 1950's, Don Oliver owned the largest Minneapolis Moline equipment dealership in the country, located in the small town of Stuttgart, Ark. The thriving business sold MM equipment across a large area. Oliver knew that farmers were interested in more power to work their fields, so he, along with his sales manager and shop foreman, built a 4-WD tractor they called the Stuttgart Special.

Don's son, Gary, was a teenager at the time and remembers the project well. He says they used the transmission out of a Minneapolis Moline Five Star tractor, the rear end out of a Moline M5, and a two-speed dropbox that Caterpillar made. Power was supplied by a MM 605A engine running on propane. The operator station sat high between the wheels. The tractor ran well and with 100 hp. it had more power than anything on the market. However, the builders agreed that since the parts were all new, the cost would be too high, and nobody would buy it.

That didn't prevent Don from using the rig himself, often putting Gary in the driver's seat. "I probably drove that tractor several hundred hours across our rice fields, and I got a lot done. It was noisy and dirty and not very easy to drive, but it did the job."

The tractor was eventually retired and now Gary Oliver keeps it in what he calls the "family museum". The shed is also home to several dozen other tractors from that era. Oliver says his nephew drove the Special in a high school parade last year and it attracted a lot of attention.

"Dad and his friends were way ahead of their time building that tractor," Oliver says, "and his customers at the dealership noticed." He built 26 tandems using a combination of new parts, spare Moline tractors that customers owned or those he could buy from salvage. They were all powered with 800cc LP engines.

Gary says the Stuttgart's growing reputation caught the attention of the MM factory and his father hauled one to the company's



Don Oliver used various Minneapolis Moline parts to create his "Stuttgart Special" tractor.

Minneapolis engineering facility. There it became a prototype for the MM A4T-1400, which was introduced in 1969. "I think that Dad had orders for 10 or 15 more of the Specials when he discontinued building them," Gary says.

A Michigan collector sold a restored

model for \$12,000 in 2021. "They're not as valuable as they once were because the people old enough to remember them aren't around anymore," Gary says.

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Love Story Made This Rare Case Extra Special

Clint Evans' RC Case is exceptional for lots of reasons. It's one of only seven prototypes made in 1936 with wide front ends and oversteering. A one-owner tractor, it required minimal restoration. If that wasn't enough, the owner insisted Evans pay her only what she and her husband paid out in cash for it in 1937.

"The RC is a rare tractor, but it's the story behind it that makes it special," says Evans.

In 2010, Evans was working on oil drilling rigs in Colorado. On his off-time, the antique tractor collector would drive the back roads. Because of the job, he always pulled a trailer and carried a winch for tractors that wouldn't start along with an air compressor.

One day he had followed an old road until it turned into a little-used driveway that ended at a set of old buildings. The house looked abandoned, but he noticed what looked like an old Case tractor parked in an open shed.

He walked up to the house, and an elderly lady came to the door. He introduced himself and explained he was driving by and saw the old Case tractor.

"You're a liar," the lady replied. "There's no road to drive by on, just my driveway."

Evans apologized and agreed she was right. He had simply followed an old road that ended at the house. However, he was interested in the tractor.

"If you want to look at the tractor, go ahead," she said. "I'll get the paperwork."

Evans checked out the tractor, not recalling ever seeing anything quite like it. When he returned to the house, she had the receipt for the tractor she and her husband Henry purchased in 1937.

"It was our wedding present to each other," she said. "We were married in 1936 but had to save our money until we could afford to buy it."

The receipt listed a price of \$631. It gave them a \$200 credit for a pair of black mules and a cash payment of \$431.

"You can have it for what we paid," she said.

Evans pulled out his wallet and handed her \$640. She looked at it and said, "I told you I'd take what we paid for it. The mules were a gift from Henry's grandfather. You can't put a price on a gift."

She handed back \$200. She then told him

the rest of the story. Henry's father had gifted them 15 acres of field as a wedding present. With his new tractor, he went out to plow the field, using the plow he had pulled behind the mule.

"I heard the tractor stop, and he came back to the house a cussing," she recalled.

"Remember that old stump in the field?" he asked me. "The mule always went around it, but the tractor didn't. It busted the rear tire."

Henry had to quit farming that fall and get a job in town to pay for a new tire, which is why the old Case had one lug rear tire and one knobby. For the next several years, things were better, and they added two sons to the family.

Then in 1942, Henry was drafted. He parked the tractor in the shed before he left, and there it stayed. He died on the beaches of Normandy.

"I couldn't crank it to start it, and neither could my boys when they were younger," she recalled. "By the time they were big enough, it wouldn't start, and one tire had gone flat."

At one point her sons wanted to sell it for scrap, but she wouldn't let them. She did let them take the fenders. Her sons had since died, and the tractor sat in the shed until Evans drove by.

"Can I give you a gift of the \$200?" he asked her.

"A gift has to be returned for something

better, and I have nothing," admonished the woman.

"How about if you cook me a dinner?" he asked.

She agreed, and as he loaded the tractor, he told her he would be back in a few weeks. Weeks turned into six months, and when he returned, she wasn't there. Windows in the house were busted out, and it was truly abandoned.

Evans took the tractor back to Texas, where he discovered how rare it was. The restoration was straightforward. Radiator fluid had frozen and busted a hole in the bottom. Mice had built nests in the block and the radiator. The magneto was fine, but the carburetor needed work. Evans opened up everything and flushed it out. When he put it up on blocks, one front wheel wouldn't spin. He discovered a leather piece behind the wheel bearing had dried out. He put in a new seal, and the bearings worked fine.

"It drives like a new tractor," says Evans. "It steers like a dream, but it takes about two blocks to turn it around."

Evans has had offers for the old tractor, including an invitation to loan it to the Case IH museum in Wisconsin. He has no intention



Photos show before and after restoration of the 1936 RC Case prototype tractor.



of parting with his unique RC Case with its one-of-a-kind story.

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